

THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION IN MEXICO.

Hon. Luis Cabrera, the head of the Mexican Commission now treating with representatives of the United States government in regard to troubles on the border, has issued a statement in regard to the religious condition in Mexico. He says that before the war of the Reform in 1856-59 the Catholic Church was the strongest temporal power existing in Mexico. One of the real reasons for this war, which was one of the bloodiest revolutions with which that country has ever been afflicted, was to break this temporal power of the Church.

The laws then adopted provided for (1) separation of Church and state; (2) incapacity of the Church to possess landed property; (3) abolition of convents.

In 1874 the Constitutionalist government made these laws a part of the constitution of the country. It is claimed that the Constitutionalist party of to-day, so far as the Church is concerned, is merely trying to carry out these laws, which were never intended to affect the exercise of any religion, which a Mexican may profess, but just to keep the Church in its organized capacity from exercising temporal power in the control of the government.

It should be remembered that about 99 per cent of all Mexicans are at least nominally Roman Catholics, so in matters of this kind it cannot be said that it is some other people who are opposing or persecuting the Catholics.

During the presidency of Diaz the clergy made no open attempt to organize themselves for political campaigns, but worked only indirectly. On his retirement from the presidency they thought that the time had come when they could organize themselves for a political struggle. A political party was, therefore, formed, consisting of the clergy and the large land owners. This was called the "Catholic party," it being supposed that the name would attract many of the more ignorant classes to them. This party was in reality the political organization of the Catholic Church.

Mr. Cabrera says: "The Catholic clergy of Mexico, directly and through the intervention of the Catholic party, were among the principal factors in the downfall of Madero, and, although perhaps Huerta was not the candidate designated to replace him, the fact is that the clerical chief, de la Barra, formed part of the cabinet which resolved upon the murder of Madero and Pino Suarez."

The clergy supported Huerta and did all in their power to inflame the people against the Constitutionalist, and this explains, if it does not justify many of the acts committed against the clergy and the Church by the soldiers of the Constitutionalist army.

The Constitutionalist government has imposed restrictions upon the clergy in some respects and has destroyed the confessionals in some places, in order the better to insure separation of Church and state.

If the Catholic clergy had remained in their proper sphere, which is religious, and not entered a sphere into which they had no right to go, they would have met with no trouble at the hands of the Constitutionalist.

According to the law of the land neither the Catholic Church nor the clergy could legally hold real estate. Even the churches were held to be the property of the State. But the clergy were allowed to administer all the affairs of the Church and of the lands which the state had taken from the Church. So the change of ownership did not amount to anything. And in many ways the clergy either evaded or violated the law forbidding the Church to hold land.

The laws of the Reform abolished all convents and all associations of monastic life. In 1874 even the charitable organization known as "Sisters of Charity" was abolished. This was done as a defense of human liberty, which was threatened by them. Under the Diaz administration these orders were tolerated and became strong again, though their existence was not recognized.

On the inauguration of the Constitutionalist government these orders were again abolished, and as most of their members were foreigners, the majority of them left the country.

Mr. Cabrera says that these laws were and are absolutely necessary to deprive the Catholic Church of its temporal power. "During recent years the Catholic Church in Mexico was entirely lawless, transgressing the regulations of the Mexican constitution and of the laws of the Reform." "The Constitutionalist government intends to maintain the absolute separation of Church and state, and proposes to make effective the abolition of the monastic orders existing in Mexico, and, above all, of those of a merely contemplative character. To sum up, the Constitutionalist government proposes to give full guarantees in religious matters to the exercise of any cult, but strictly enforces the observance of the laws of the Reform and of the Mexican constitution."

It should be borne in mind that Mr. Cabrera is a Roman Catholic, and that he is one of the ablest and most prominent men in Mexico. He must know whereof he speaks.

The Church of Rome boasts that it is the same in all places and in all time. It might be well for the United States to learn some lessons from Mexico.

AFTER THE HOLIDAYS—WHAT?

Holidays may be an advantage or they may be serious hurt. What follows? This is the criterion: Do we feel that we have finished up a year or a half year profitably? Now, with good conscience we can look the coming year in the face. Was it well to relax the strained life and take a new breathing spell?

Or was the holiday season a salve to hide the failures and shameful defections of the past; a round of pleasures to fill up and round off a year of shortcoming?

Did the holiday leave us on a lower plane of endeavor, or give us a time to take stock of our moral and spiritual assets, and gather up our strength for the battle beyond?

The answer to these honest questions will determine whether our holiday was a profitable one or not.

It furnishes to many a church the opportunity of acquaintanceship with its members. The social side is uppermost at this season, and the social element is prominent. Does our, your church seize the opportunity for a better knowledge of the trials and burdens and heart-breaking failures of so many people?

Somehow we get a little nearer to one another during these days of relaxation. The great need of the Church is to know its members, so that the word of help may be used. "Every heart knoweth its own bitterness and a stranger intermeddled not therewith;" but we are hardly strangers to one another at this season. Even soldiers in the mud-spattered and death-strewn trenches fraternize for once during the year. If we use it aright we will find the aftermath of the holiday season is a blessed one, leading us in higher places of useful service to our fellow-men. Many a heart aches for a kindly word, a sympathetic touch at this season of the year, one perhaps it would be hard to give at other seasons, and one that

followed up will give us a leverage to help that soul over many a hard place.

It furnishes an occasion of kindly aid that it would be indelicate to extend on other occasions.

What about that overworked and under-paid pastor. A kindly expression at this season of the year from the pantries and granaries of his people will not only help to keep the wolf of hunger away from the door, but cement the bonds of love between the people and the pastor. What a fine opportunity for mother and father to get an inside view of the development of the boy or girl away at school.

In the exuberance of the returning hours, and the confidences of the school life, the wise parents may enter into the life of the youth which will help them to keep that which is so hard to keep, an overcoming influence on the boy or girl's life.

They can appreciate the difficulties of the time away from home better, and anything that brings the parent and child into the same viewpoint on life will make for good. Most parents fail to realize that schoolboys or girls are no longer children who must be tied to apron-strings. They begin to know it when the boy comes stalking in, having grown six inches and deepened his voice into the edge of manhood. The parents go to school during the holidays and their children are the text-books.

To the boys and girls the holiday is a blessed time if wisely used, and from it they may learn many useful lessons.

After the holidays they see that enjoyment is fleeting. How soon they are over, and the train leaves to carry them home again. The days have flown on wings. It is a profitable lesson. God intends us to be happy, but most of the pleasures of life are swift-footed.

They may learn in the days of reflection after the holidays that enjoyment is not the end of life. It is a splendid concomitant, it rounds out life, but for itself alone it is a miserable failure. The ennui, the sense of abject loss, the wistful lingering in the pleasures of the past may teach us to be up and doing. Pleasure is not living.

After the holidays a higher and holier view of life itself—God's gracious gift—let us take hold of it with the determination that no bitter results shall crowd into our next holiday time. No thought of duties undone, of opportunities unseized, of life wasted in a thing that has no uplifting salvation in it.

After the holidays a clearer and cleaner view of our duty to our fellow-man. No selfish word or thought shall trip us up. We will be more altruistic in our work.

After the holidays a closer walk with God, as our Father. With Jesus as our Helper. Perhaps we forgot him in the high-day of the holiday. It was not a holy day to us. We need him and we will seek him anew.

A. A. L.

Contributed

ELDERS AND DEACONS IN CHURCH WORK.

By Rev. James Russell.

Rev. W. J. McInnis, of Hattiesburg, Miss., began a meeting, without any assistance, except deacons, elders and a consecrated laity, continued for fourteen days, and through the blessing of God ended with fifteen additions, mostly on profession of faith.

This is a great example to our whole Church, especially to those churches sending up a report of not one single addition. In the one